



## What is racism and how do we challenge it?



Recent news has shone a spotlight on racism in America, and around the world. We have spoken the names of many including Amaud Arbery, the 25 year old black man who was out jogging when he was shot by a father and son; Breonna Taylor, a 26 year old healthcare worker who was shot eight times while she slept during a police raid that was done in error; George Floyd, a 46 year old father who was arrested under suspicion of using a fake bank note and was restrained by a white police officer kneeling on his neck, causing his death despite him saying "I can't breathe" multiple times. Each of these, as well as so many other incidents now and in the past, were caused by racism and have made a global conversation urgent around the different types of racism, our responsibility in addressing them and why, in 2020, racism still hasn't been successfully tackled.

While we may not have recently experienced the same levels of police brutality and gun violence, here in the UK we are not in nocent. George the Poet spoke on Newsnight this week and has very clearly articulated the situation in the UK, based on statistics. You can watch that [here](#).

Community has always been at the heart of WES, and we are proud of the way students recognise the value of diversity and the importance of accepting difference. The last couple of weeks have reminded us how important it is for everyone to stand up against racism and to consider whether we have been active enough in doing this in the past. We hope that this edition of the PSHE bulletin gives you some of the tools to show resilience and leadership in being anti-racist, which means actively challenging racism. We are also reflecting on what we can do to drive anti-racism as a school, now and on return to the building, please let your tutor or Ms Maclennan know if you have any suggestions on how we can do this.

### What is racism?

Racism is a system of advantages and disadvantages based on someone's race. Racism is caused by false beliefs that those members of different races or ethnicities have different characteristics that make some inferior (less good) and others superior (more good). The police officers involved in the death of George Floyd wrongly thought he was inferior because he was black. Racism comes in different forms. Sometimes racism is obvious - like George Floyd's murder - other times it is subtle and can be ingrained in our societal structures in such a way that not everyone recognises it. Racism in any form is **unacceptable**. One of the best ways to tackle racism, and to be an anti-racist, is to educate yourself so that you can recognise and challenge racism where you find it. We hope this bulletin will help you do that. On the next pages is an **incomplete** list of some of the ways racism shows up and how it can be challenged.

### Black Lives Matter

#BlackLivesMatter was founded in 2013 in response to the acquittal of Trayvon Martin's murderer. Black Lives Matter Foundation, Inc is a global organization in the US, UK, and Canada, whose mission is to eradicate white supremacy and build local power to intervene in violence inflicted on Black communities by the state and vigilantes. Protests against racism and police violence, organised by Black Lives Matter, amongst other organisations, have been going on for more than a week now across America and begun in London on the 31<sup>st</sup> of May. The movement has been calling for justice for George Floyd in particular and has succeeded in having the police officer who killed George charged with second-degree murder and charging the other three officers who were present with aiding and abetting.

**N.B. The Black Lives Matter campaign is not saying that all lives don't matter.** It is championing those lives that history and present day has repeatedly shown us are unsafe and matter less. [More here](#).

## Systematic Racism

A system in which public policies, institutional practices, cultural representations, and other norms work in various ways to perpetuate racial inequity. It identifies dimensions of our history and culture that have allowed privileges associated with whiteness, and those who are white passing, and disadvantages associated with colour to endure and adapt over time. Structural racism is something that few people or institutions actively choose to practice. Instead it has been a feature of the social, economic and political systems in which we all exist.

## Institutional Racism

This refers to the policies and practices within and across institutions that, intentionally or not, produce outcomes that chronically favour, or put a racial group at a disadvantage. Poignant examples of institutional racism can be found in school disciplinary policies in which students of colour are punished at much higher rates than their white counterparts, in the criminal justice system, and within many employment sectors in which day-to-day operations, as well as hiring and firing practices can significantly disadvantage workers of colour.

## How can these forms of racism be challenged?

The best way to challenge both systematic and institutional racism is to call it out whenever you see it and demand change. This could be through individual conversations, social media, signing petitions, lobbying local MPs, voicing your feelings to the student council or donating to causes that are working to dismantle these systems and create a more equal society.

## Microaggressions

A [microaggression](#) is a statement, action, or incident of indirect, subtle, or unintentional discrimination against a marginalised group. Here we will consider racist microaggressions but they can also be linked to other parts of your identity such as gender, sexuality, religion, or a combination of these. Often, in isolation they appear harmless, and critics have suggested that they are trivial and negligible. It is, however, the day to day constancy of micro aggressive assaults that make them gradually erode the wellbeing and resilience of the victim. They can occur anywhere, anytime. Sometimes microaggressions are spoken, for example someone saying, "[Where are you really from?](#)" Other times they are behaviours, such as crossing the street to avoid a black man or a shop owner only addressing the white customers.

## How can this racism be challenged?

It is important to challenge these microaggressions, in others and in yourself. This can be difficult as the person you are challenging may feel under attack for what they have said or how they have acted and respond negatively (often caused by [white fragility](#)). Here are some ideas of ways to start a productive dialogue:

- **Ask for more clarification:** "Could you say more about what you mean by that?" "How have you come to think that?"
- **Separate intent from impact:** "You may not have realised this, but when you \_\_\_\_\_ [comment/behaviour], it was hurtful/offensive because \_\_\_\_\_. Instead you could \_\_\_\_\_ [different language or behaviour]."
- **Share your own process:** "I noticed that you \_\_\_\_\_ [comment/behaviour]. I used to do/say that too, but then I learned \_\_\_\_\_."



## Internalised racism

When you experience microaggressions repeatedly, the effects accumulate and can lead to low self-esteem or a belief that the stereotypes are true, which they are not. Believing that you are inferior or acting on the negative stereotypes associated with your race and ethnicity are examples of internalised racism.

## How can this racism be challenged?

The good news is if you have recognised that you need to challenge this type of racism, you have already taken the first step to challenge it. The next steps are to unlearn the racism that you have internalised, which can be done by learning more about your race and ethnicity. Educating ourselves about the history of racism allows us to continuously seek to unlearn a colour-blind approach to history. Sharing what you learn will help others unlearn racism too.

## Hate crimes

Hate crime can be any criminal or non-criminal act such as graffiti, vandalism to a property, name calling, assault or online abuse using social media. Hate crimes can be based on race and/or any part of your identity, such as your religion, gender or sexuality.

### How can this type of racism be challenged?

This [website](#) gives good advice on what you can do if you are a victim of a hate crime. Writing down or recording the details of the incident(s) is important if you are the victim or a witness of the crime. Everything should be reported to the police.

## What can I do?

Every member of our community has a responsibility to educate themselves and recognise racist stereotypes, attitudes, behaviours or policies that others, or they themselves, hold. If it is safe to do so, we encourage you to challenge these racist instances and if you are unsure how to, you can speak to your tutor, or an adult you trust and they will do their best to advise you. We expect this of all members of our community, regardless of race. Leaving it to those who experience racism is not good enough.

If you do not believe that this is your issue you need to ask yourself why not. Not having to care about race is a freedom only afforded to those who have never experience racism. This is an example of [white privilege](#), a term that describes the unearned advantages that are granted to some because of their whiteness or ability to “pass” as white. If you find yourself in this situation the best thing to do is to examine your privilege and learn about other people’s experiences.

In order to be able to be a part of change we need first to educate ourselves. Nelson Mandela said, “**Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world**”. The next page provides a starting point for this education. This list is by no means exhaustive. Please be mindful that this list is being sent to all year groups and so you may need consider whether individual resources are more age appropriate than others.

If you are in doubt as to how much of an effect you, as a child, can have, watch [Mighty Times: The Children’s March](#) to see how school children marched against segregation in Alabama .

## Racist Policing

In 1999 the [MacPherson Report](#) found the Metropolitan Police to be institutionally racist and in the past 21 years the police have done a lot to show they are addressing this. For example, they have hired many more ethnic minorities as police officers and have made it more difficult for the police to stop people based on their stereotypes - the police need a reason to stop and search you and have had anti-racism training. Progress has been made but many people still argue that more work needs to be done to remove racist biases. Black boys are still 7 times more likely than white boys to be stopped and searched by the police and Asian boys are 3 times more likely.

### How can this type of racism be challenged?

Knowing your [rights](#) if stopped and searched is really important. You have a right to record interactions between yourself and the police - you need to ask permission before reaching for your phone (so they know what you are reaching for). You can also record interactions between the police and others if you witness something that you think could be mistreatment. You can also keep a record of interactions with the police, either by hand or through this [app](#).



## Films

### **Remember the Titans (PG) – Available on Amazon Prime or Disney+**

Suburban Virginia schools have been segregated for generations. One Black and one White high school are closed, and the students sent to T.C. Williams High School under federal mandate to integrate. The year is seen through the eyes of the football team where the man hired to coach the Black school is made head coach over the highly successful white coach. Based on the actual events of 1971, the team becomes the unifying symbol for the community as the boys and the adults learn to depend on and trust each other.

### **Hidden Figures (PG)**

The untold story of Katherine G. Johnson, Dorothy Vaughan and Mary Jackson brilliant African-American women working at NASA and serving as the brains behind one of the greatest operations in history the launch of astronaut John Glenn into orbit. The visionary trio crossed all gender and race lines to inspire generations to dream big.

## TV Shows

### **When They See Us (15) – Available on Netflix**

Based on a true story, this series follows a group of 5 teenaged boys of colour who were arrested, interrogated and coerced into confessing to a brutal attack on a woman in Central Park that they did not commit.

### **Seven Seconds – Available on Netflix**

When 15-year-old black cyclist Brenton Butler dies in a hit-and-run accident-- with a white police officer behind the wheel of the vehicle-- Jersey City explodes with racial tension. This crime drama explores the aftermath of the accident, which includes an attempted cover-up by the police department and a volatile trial. Assistant prosecutor KJ wants to prosecute the hit-and-run as a hate crime, in addition to a negligent homicide. The longer the case drags on without a resolution, the more tense the situation becomes.

## Documentaries

### **The Racial Wealth Gap (15) – Explained – Available on Netflix (approx. 16 minutes)**

This brief documentary discusses how slavery, housing discrimination and centuries of inequality have combined to create a racial wealth gap in America.

### **13<sup>th</sup> (15) – Available on Netflix (1hr 40)**

An in-depth look at the prison system in the United States and how it reveals the nation's history of racial inequality, 13th is a 2016 American documentary by director Ava DuVernay. The film explores the intersection of race, justice, and mass incarceration in the United States. It is titled after the Thirteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution, adopted in 1865, which abolished slavery throughout the United States and ended involuntary servitude except as a punishment for conviction of a crime. **Please be aware that this includes explicit images and videos of violence against black people**

### **The Life and Death of Marsha P Johnson (15) – Available on Netflix (1hr 45)**

When Stonewall Veteran and black transwoman Marsha P Johnson turned up dead shortly after Gay Pride in 1992, it was the latest in a series of murders, gay bashings, and "mysterious" deaths in the local gay community. Like the other suspicious deaths, Johnson's death is quickly dismissed as a "suicide", even though there is no evidence that Johnson was suicidal, and significant evidence that Johnson was harassed and stalked on that very night. Victoria Cruz investigates the mysterious death using archival interviews with Johnson, and new interviews with Johnson's family, friends and fellow activists.

## Podcasts

### **Have You Heard George's Podcast? – BBC Sound**

George the Poet is a London-born spoken word performer of Ugandan heritage. His innovative brand of musical poetry has won him critical acclaim both as a recording artist and a social commentator. This podcast from delivers a fresh take on inner city life through a mix of storytelling, music and fiction.

### **Soul Music: Strange Fruit – BBC Radio 4 - Single episode**

"Southern trees bear a strange fruit, blood on the leaves and blood at the root..." Billie Holiday's famous song expresses the horror and anguish of those communities subjected to a campaign of lynching in the American South. Soul Music hears the stories of people whose relatives were lynched by white racists and of the various forms of grief, anger and reconciliation that have followed. These include the cousin of teenager Emmett Till, whose killing in 1955 for whistling at a white woman, added powerful impetus to the civil rights movement.

### **In The Dark Podcast – Series 2 – Curtis Flowers**

An investigative podcast, hosted by Madeleine Baran, that has examined the case of Curtis Flowers, a black man who has been tried six times for the same crime. Despite two mistrials and four trials being overturned due to prosecutorial misconduct, Curtis has been on death row for over twenty years.

## Online Resources

- Watch a [news bulletin](#) about *Stamped: Racism, Antiracism, and You* by Jason Reynolds and Ibram X. Kendi
- NY Times [article](#) about how to respond to microaggressions
- [Kids of Colour](#) (@kidsocolourhq) is a social media platform for young people that explores identity and racism
- [Article](#) about unlearning racism
- [Video](#) about your rights if stopped and searched
- Ted Talk [video](#) about getting comfortable with the discomfort in calling out racism
- [Article](#) about institutional racism in the police force following the MacPherson Report

## Fiction

### **The Hate U Give – Angie Thomas**

This is Thomas's debut novel, expanded from a short story she wrote in college in reaction to the police shooting of Oscar Grant. The book is narrated by Starr Carter, a 16-year-old black girl from a poor neighbourhood who attends an elite private school in a predominantly white, affluent part of the city. Starr becomes entangled in a national news story after she witnesses a white police officer shoot and kill her childhood friend, Khalil. She speaks up about the shooting in increasingly public ways, and social tensions culminate in a riot after a grand jury decides not to indict the police officer for the shooting.

*This novel has also been adapted into a film (12A), which can be bought or rented through Amazon Prime.*

### **Noughts & Crosses – Malorie Blackman**

Noughts & Crosses is a series of young adult novels. The series is speculative fiction describing an alternative history in which native African people had colonised the European people, rather than the other way around, with Africans having made Europeans their slaves. The series takes place in an alternative 21st-century Britain. Sephy is a Cross – a member of the dark-skinned ruling class. Callum is a nought – a 'colourless' member of the underclass who were once slaves to the Crosses. The two have been friends since early childhood. But that's as far as it can go. Until the first steps are taken towards more social equality and a limited number of Noughts are allowed into Cross school. Against a background of prejudice and distrust, intensely highlighted by violent terrorist activity by Noughts, a romance builds between Sephy and Callum – a romance that is to lead both of them into terrible danger.

*The BBC have recently done a TV adaptation of Noughts & Crosses, which you can find on iPlayer.*

### **To Kill a Mockingbird – Harper Lee**

To Kill a Mockingbird was published in 1960. Instantly successful, widely read in high schools and middle schools in the United States, it has become a classic of modern American literature, winning the Pulitzer Prize. The plot and characters are loosely based on Lee's observations of her family, her neighbours and an event that occurred near her hometown of Monroeville, Alabama, in 1936, when she was ten. The story is told by Scout, as an adult looking back at her childhood. Scout tells of her father, Atticus Finch, defending a black man accused of raping a white woman in their very segregated town in the Deep South.

## Non-Fiction

### **Why I'm No Longer Talking To White People About Race – Reni Eddo-Lodge**

Reni Eddo-Lodge wrote about her frustration with the way that discussions of race and racism in Britain were being led by those who weren't affected by it. She posted a piece on her blog, entitled: 'Why I'm No Longer Talking to White People About Race'. The post went viral and comments flooded in from others desperate to speak up about their own experiences. Galvanised by this clear hunger for open discussion, she decided to dig into the source of these feelings. Exploring issues from eradicated black history to the political purpose of white dominance, whitewashed feminism to the inextricable link between class and race, Reni Eddo-Lodge offers a timely and essential new framework for how to see, acknowledge and counter racism. It is a searing, illuminating, necessary exploration of what it is to be a person of colour in Britain today.

### **Stamped: Racism, Antiracism, and You - Jason Reynolds and Ibram X. Kendi**

The construct of race has always been used to gain and keep power, to create dynamics that separate and silence. This remarkable reimagining of Dr. Ibram X. Kendi's National Book Award-winning *Stamped from the Beginning* reveals the history of racist ideas in America and inspires hope for an antiracist future. It takes you on a race journey from then to now, shows you why we feel how we feel, and why the poison of racism lingers. It also proves that while racist ideas have always been easy to fabricate and distribute, they can also be discredited.

### **Just Mercy – Bryan Stevenson**

Bryan Stevenson was a young lawyer when he founded the Equal Justice Initiative, a legal practice dedicated to defending those most desperate and in need: the poor, the wrongly condemned, and women and children trapped in the farthest reaches of our criminal justice system. One of his first cases was that of Walter McMillian, a young black man who was sentenced to die for the murder of a white woman that he didn't commit. This book focuses on Walter's story while incorporating many others and in doing so shines a light on the unfairness and structural racism of the justice system.

*Just Mercy (12A) has been adapted to a movie, that came out earlier this year, it can be rented or bought on Amazon Prime.*